91st Congress
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DIPLOMATIC AND STRATEGIC IMPACT OF MULTIPLE WARHEAD MISSILES

REPORT

OF THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY POLICY AND SCIENTIFIC DEVELOPMENTS

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ON THE

HEARINGS HELD BY THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON JULY 8, 9, 15, 17, 22, 24, 30, AND AUGUST 5, 1969

PURSUANT TO

H. Res. 143

A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS TO CONDUCT THOROUGH STUDIES AND INVESTIGATIONS OF ALL MATTERS COMING WITHIN THE JURISDICTION OF THE COMMITTEE

OCTOBER 9, 1969

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FOREWORD

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, D.C., October 9, 1969.

The report submitted to the Committee on Foreign Affairs by the Honorable Clement J. Zablocki, chairman of the Subcommittee on National Security Policy and Scientific Developments, deals with diplomatic and strategic impact of multiple-warhead missiles.

The findings and recommendations in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of the membership of the Committee on Foreign Affairs. This report is filed in the hope that it will prove useful to the Congress in its important function of legislative oversight.

THOMAS E. MORGAN, *Chairman.*

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

OCTOBER 9, 1969.

Hon. THOMAS E. MORGAN,
Chairman, Committee on Foreign Affairs,
U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, D.C.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: I am pleased to submit the following report on "Diplomatic and Strategic Impact of Multiple Warhead Missiles," prepared as a result of a series of hearings held in July and August 1969, by the Subcommittee on National Security Policy and Scientific Developments.

It is hoped that the views contained in this report, together with the printed hearings issued previously, will be useful to the members of the committee and to the Congress in the continuing effort to formulate wise and effective national security policies for the United States of America.

CLEMENT J. ZABLOCKI,
Chairman, Subcommittee on National Security Policy and Scientific Developments.

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INTRODUCTION

In July and August 1969, the House Subcommittee on National Security Policy and Scientific Developments held hearings on the foreign policy and strategic implications of multiple-warhead missiles, particularly MIRV's—multiple independently targeted reentry vehicles.

The objectives of the subcommittee inquiry into this development in nuclear weaponry were twofold: First, there were a number of resolutions under consideration calling for a moratorium on the development of MIRV's by the United States and the Soviet Union. These resolutions were sponsored or cosponsored by 113 Members of the House of Representatives.

Second, the subcommittee sought to examine in a larger context the effect of MIRV's on the strategic balance between the two superpowers, on the prospects for successful strategic arms limitation talks (SALT) with the Soviet Union, and on the long-range prospects for effective arms control.

The subcommittee heard testimony from 15 witnesses, including Members of Congress, experts from the academic community, specialists from research organizations, and representatives of the Departments of State and Defense.

The Members of Congress who testified were Representatives John B. Anderson of Illinois, Jonathan Bingham of New York, Jeffery Cohelan of California, Thomas Foley of Washington, Craig Hosmer of California, and William S. Moorhead of Pennsylvania.

Nongovernmental experts who testified were Dr. Donald G. Brennan, strategic specialist at the Hudson Institute, New York; Dr. Joseph I. Coffey, professor of public and international affairs at the University of Pittsburgh; Dean Adrian S. Fisher of the Georgetown University Law Center and former Deputy Director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA); Dr. George B. Kistiakowsky, professor of chemistry at Harvard University; Dr. Herbert Scoville, Jr., former Director of Scientific Research for ACDA and the Central Intelligence Agency; and Dr. Thomas W. Wolfe of the Rand Corp.

Speaking for the Department of State was Philip J. Farley, the alternate U.S. representative to SALT and the then Deputy Director-designate of ACDA, and for the Department of Defense, Dr. John S. Foster, Jr., Director of Defense Research and Engineering, and Dr. G. Warren Nutter, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs.

The testimony of these witnesses appears in the printed record of the hearings, issued in August 1969, under the title, "Diplomatic and Strategic Impact of Multiple Warhead Missiles."

The information developed in the course of the MIRV hearings has assisted the subcommittee in making an analysis of the issues involved and in reaching its conclusions.

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Analysis and Findings

The intercontinental ballistic missile as originally developed and deployed featured one warhead for every launcher. By the early 1960's, however, it had become technologically possible and economically feasible to place more than one warhead on each missile. Thus a new weapons "family" was developed.

The first member of the family was the multiple reentry vehicle (MRV), a cluster of several warheads which fell together on a single target.

While related to the MRV, the MIRV is a significant advance because its multiple warheads can be aimed at widely separated targets. For this reason the MIRV is sometimes called a "space bus" whose nuclear bomb "passengers" are released sequentially during its flight.

According to current plans about one-half of the U.S. Minuteman ICBM force is to be converted to MIRV's and will be designated "Minuteman III." In addition, a majority of Polaris submarines will be refitted for a new Poseidon missile which also will be equipped with MIRV's.

The cost of MIRV'ing U.S. missile forces, if the development is carried out as planned, has been variously estimated at from $10 billion to $20 billion.

The Case for MIRV

At this point it is appropriate to review the reasons advanced by the Department of Defense for developing for future deployment two strategic nuclear weapons systems, Minuteman III and Poseidon, which use the MIRV technology.

Proponents of its development for future deployment maintain that MIRV is necessary in order to protect the credibility of our deterrent forces, and thereby contributes to the stability of the nuclear balance between our country and the U.S.S.R. The need to deter a first strike by having the capacity to retaliate unacceptable damage upon the Soviet Union is viewed as essential to the maintenance of the balance of power.

According to testimony from Dr. Foster, since the early 1960's, when it appeared that the Soviets were developing an anti-ballistic-missile (ABM) capability, the United States deployed several types of penetration aids to insure that U.S. missiles could overcome possible defenses and reach targets in the U.S.S.R.

Multiple-warhead missiles were developed for that purpose. Initially these were MRV's. However, as the Soviets developed the Galosh ABM system, it was feared that its megaton-range warheads could destroy more than one threatening object with a defensive explosive burst.

"Soviet defense, in other words, could achieve the potential to intercept and destroy a significant percentage of the American deterrent missile warheads and therefore could threaten the credibility and effectiveness of our deterrent," said Dr. Foster.

In order to obtain a more reliable method of delivering warheads, it was believed necessary to spread them out further in space, thereby preventing one defensive blast from destroying several of them. This thinking resulted in work toward independently targeted reentry ve-

hicles which could effectively circumvent or exhaust Soviet ABM's and maintain America's ability to inflict unacceptable damage on Russian cities and population through a retaliatory strike.

According to Dr. Foster:

> * * * the things that lead to stability, as we see our strategic posture, are the ability to survive a strike and the ability to penetrate the other side's defenses.
>
> The things that tend to destabilize are the ability to knock out the opponent's strategic force and the ability to intercept his force. Those are the destabilizing components.
>
> I believe, on those grounds, that the Safeguard system in attempting to protect our deterrent, is stabilizing, and the MIRV, in attempting to maintain our deterrent by penetration, is stabilizing.
>
> For the same reason, I think that the Soviet SS-9's are destabilizing to the extent that they are MIRV'ed and oriented toward our Minuteman force, and the Soviet defense of their cities by the Moscow defenses, and possibly the upgrading of the SAM's to provide a capability for the European portion of Russia, are destabilizing.

Because of the extremely small yield of submarine-launched MIRV's, and because it is proposed to MIRV only small to medium throw weight missiles whose megatonage is limited so they could not constitute a first-strike threat, proponents believe the American MIRV is a stabilizing response to the destabilizing Soviet ABM. While it cannot be used to knock out the Soviet's first-strike capability, it does add the penetration needed to deter any first strike against the United States.

The principal purpose for the U.S. MIRV as stated by the Department of Defense is, in short, to assure our ability to penetrate any possible future expansion or upgrading of Soviet ballistic missile defenses. Indications are that the Soviets are also working on MIRV technology. Dr. Foster asserted:

"I don't see any way to convince ourselves that the Soviet deployment of their MIRV—if it is a MIRV—has not reached the point where it could be deployed." Therefore, many believe that if the United States stops testing and planning for deployment of our own MIRV's, there will be no way for us to be sure that the Soviets have not continued to expand and upgrade their own ballistic missile systems by testing and deploying their own MIRV systems.

The Case Against MIRV

Unlike the debate over the ABM, in which a key issue was the ability of the system to operate effectively, critics of MIRV do not doubt that MIRV will work. Rather, they contend that its very effectiveness will severely accelerate the arms race and increase the dangers of a nuclear holocaust.

The case against MIRV generally is based on three propositions: (1) MIRV is unnecessary; (2) MIRV is dangerous and provocative; and (3) MIRV injures both short- and long-range prospects for arms control.

First, critics argue that MIRV is unnecessary as a means of assuring penetration against the present Soviet ABM system or any probable prospective deployment. It is contended that present U.S. missile forces, including our MRV'ed submarines and other penetration aids, are more than sufficient to overwhelm Soviet ballistic missile defenses.

Should an unexpected Soviet buildup of its ABM system begin, the

United States could, in time to offset it, take other steps less provocative than deploying MIRV. These might include enlarging our own ABM system, adding mobile or semimobile ICBM's, hardening of missile silos, or deploying more nuclear submarines.

Second, the opponents believe the deployment of MIRV would have dangerous consequences on several counts—it would increase the number of nuclear warheads in a missile force severalfold in a very short time frame and thus rapidly escalate the arms race. Deployment of MIRV's also would develop strong pressure for counteractions as each side sought to insure its own deterrent, including the adoption of "fire on warning" policies with attendant possibilities of miscalculation.

Most important, the deployment of MIRV's would undermine the stability of the strategic balance. Because of the potential that accurate MIRV's have for providing a single missile with the capability, or the perceived capability, of destroying more than one land-based missile silo in a counterforce attack, MIRV's provide a great advantage and therefore a strong incentive for initiating a nuclear attack against land-based forces.

It is argued that the "balance of terror" based on the assured second-strike capabilities of both superpowers would be seriously degraded. Instead, with both sides having MIRV'ed missiles, in a crisis there would be greatly increased incentives for a preemptive first strike rather than risk one from the other side. Any action which increases such incentives increases the risk of nuclear war.

Third, those opposed to MIRV believe that once the multiple warheads are capable of being deployed, it will be impossible to assess with any confidence the size of enemy missile forces without onsite inspections of a type and thoroughness that seems most unlikely. Since national surveillance means are inadequate to the determination of how many warheads might be on a given launcher and onsite inspections are unlikely to be agreed to, control of the arms race would be virtually impossible.

As a result, prospects for success of the forthcoming SALT negotiations would be considerably dimmed. Further, even if some agreement were reached which limited the numbers of offensive missiles but allowed the deployment of MIRV, the effect on the arms race would be limited.

As the arguments for and against the deployment of MIRV were developed during the course of the subcommittee hearings, certain key issues emerged which require extended consideration in this report.

MIRV as a "First Strike" Weapon

A key issue in a consideration of the MIRV is its mission. Although one witness suggested that the Soviet effort to MIRV the SS–9 rockets is an effort to assure destruction of large metropolitan areas in the United States in a retaliatory strike, the majority of those who testified on the point expressed fears that the weapons had a counterforce mission which could be adapted to a first-strike policy.

The SS–9, with its huge booster capability, could carry several warheads in the megaton range and, according to Defense Department representatives, with sufficient accuracy, could knock out several Minuteman silos. If the Soviets continue down the path they have

started with multiple-reentry vehicles, eventual deployment of their system can only be considered destabilizing since it would put the U.S. deterrent in some jeopardy.

It has been suggested by both proponents and opponents of MIRV deployment that because of the Soviets' larger booster capacity, full MIRV'ing of missile forces on both sides would leave the advantage with them, despite the current U.S. lead in the technology. If for no other reason, it has been argued, the United States should seek to prevent the development of MIRV's in the arms race.

As has been previously pointed out, the Department of Defense witnesses testified before the subcommittee that the objective of U.S. MIRV's is to assure penetration of Soviet ballistic missile defenses, a second-strike mission which does not require high accuracies. However, some confusion has arisen on this point because of statements by officials of the Department of Defense indicating that the United States is seeking to improve the accuracies of its Poseidon missiles against "hard targets."

Several witnesses before the subcommittee testified that such a policy would seem provocative to Soviet planners because of the suggestion that Poseidon could have a first-strike role.

The committee was cautioned that the net result of high-accuracy MIRV'ed forces on both sides would be, in time, to render land-based ICBM's virtually obsolete as a second-strike weapon because of their vulnerability to attack.

While such an eventuality is only speculation, there was general agreement among witnesses before the subcommittee that in the technological duel between the protection of land-based ICBM's and their destruction by missile-borne warheads, the advantage lies with the offense.

In other words, the ability to harden a missile silo or otherwise protect it will not be sufficient to protect the silo from the destructive blasts of enemy missiles if known technical possibilities are fully exploited.

MIRV and the Prospects for Arms Control

Opponents of MIRV deployment contend that once the multiple-warhead systems are integrated into the nuclear arsenals of the superpowers, meaningful arms control becomes considerably more difficult, if not virtually impossible. Neither nation would be able to determine by national surveillance means how many missiles were deployed by the other side. A single "hole" might contain a single warhead or more than a dozen MIRV'ed warheads.

The only sure test would be onsite inspections in which one nation removed the shielding from its missiles to allow the other nation to see how many warheads they contained. The Soviet Union with its traditional strong opposition to onsite inspection of military facilities, would be almost certain to oppose that kind of inspection procedure. Because of the obvious problems which such an operation would entail, even the United States might be reluctant to permit it.

While representatives of the Defense Department who testified before the subcommittee agreed that onsite inspection would be the only foolproof way of counting warheads once forces were MIRV'ed, they

were unwilling to rule out the possibility that both sides could reach an arms control agreement based on that method of monitoring compliance.

If MIRV is deployed on both sides and onsite inspections are not possible, however, it has been suggested that arms control agreements might be based on criteria such as the size of silos or "throw weight;" that is, the amount of payload which a given launcher could deliver.

While an arms control agreement based on such criteria obviously would appear to be better than no agreement at all, the net result might well be to turn the arms race in new directions, instead of halting it, as both sides attempted to explore and exploit avenues of technological advance left unrestricted by the pact.

The "Point of No Return" on MIRV

A third key issue in the MIRV debate, and one which gives it a crucial time dimension, is the assumption that once either side has tested the weapons system to the point of operational confidence, it is no longer possible to control its deployment.

The reason is this: The testing of a multiple-reentry vehicle by both nations thus far has been observable by national surveillance means possessed by the United States and also, apparently, by the Soviet Union. The actual deployment, as has been noted previously, could not be verified without onsite inspections. Thus, once one side had finished its testing program or had achieved operation confidence in its MIRV, the other side would be forced to assume that it was deploying the weapon and would be required to react accordingly.

There has been some suggestion, in the press and elsewhere, that this "point of no return" already has been reached—that the MIRV "genie" already has escaped the bottle. If so, this situation would have important implications for the subcommittee study. It would, in effect, render moot all talk of a moratorium on MIRV testing and deployment.

After having given this issue careful consideration, the subcommittee finds no firm evidence that the "point of no return" on MIRV has yet been reached by either side.

According to the Defense Department, the current U.S. test program on both the Minuteman III and the Poseidon missiles is scheduled to end in June 1970. While operational confidence does not necessarily coincide with the end of developmental testing, it should not prove impossible to convince the Soviets that our Nation is not, in fact, deploying a MIRV. The information available to them because we have an open society and the absence of the customary follow-on operational testing of a MIRV, should allay any fears of U.S. cheating.

Because the Soviet Union is a closed society, we are at a disadvantage in ascertaining the actions and intentions of its leaders. At the same time, it appears that the United States currently holds a lead over the U.S.S.R. in the development of MIRV. Many in the intelligence community believe that the Soviets are testing a MRV; others—particularly in the Department of Defense—believe it to be functionally equivalent to a MIRV.

Regardless of what the Soviet multiple warhead system ultimately turns out to be, there is no indication that the Russians have yet reached a point of operational confidence at which they would be will-

ing to deploy it in place of existing, proved single-warhead missiles without any further flight testing. Dr. Foster told the subcommittee he did not know anyone in the intelligence community who believed that the Soviets had completed testing their multiple warhead or would be satisfied with the system at this point.

Under those circumstances, it may be assumed that some time—albeit a very limited period—does remain before either side reaches the "point of no return" on MIRV, insofar as it might be deployed with operational confidence. This should not be a cause for complacency; rather, if action is to be taken to control this advance in nuclear weaponry, the effort must be undertaken in urgency.

The Possibilities of Cheating on a MIRV Moratorium

A fourth key issue in the MIRV controversy is whether it would be possible for either side to cheat on a mutually agreed moratorium on MIRV and thus in time gain a decisive strategic advantage.

When one reviews the history of the past three decades it is clear that the United States cannot deal with the Soviet Union on the basis of mutual trust. Agreements, particularly those which affect the vital national security of the United States, must be capable of being strictly policed.

Proponents of a MIRV moratorium believe that a mutual ban on the testing and deployment of the weapon system meets that requirement. The ability of the United States to monitor Soviet missile flight testing through national means of surveillance has achieved so high a degree of sophistication and reliability, they contend, that there would be virtually no risk for the United States in a mutually agreed moratorium.

In other words, if the Soviets attempted to cheat on the agreement we would know and could take appropriate action.

Several other witnesses before the subcommittee, however, were less confident. It was suggested that several avenues of deception might be open to the Soviets if they were inclined to test clandestinely. These would give either ambiguous indications to our surveillance instruments or none at all.

Methods of deception might include tests in which only one reentry vehicle of a MIRV was fired, launches from the interior of the Soviet Union which would be only partially visible to us, or tests conducted in clouds of chaff which would confuse our radars.

It is clear that these possibilities must be faced squarely in any attempt to arrange a mutual halt in MIRV testing. The situation suggests that a MIRV ban—at least in any permanent form—must entail more than a simple agreement by both sides to halt. There must be collateral agreements on both sides about the configuration of future missile launchings to eliminate ambiguity and the opportunity to break a moratorium without detection.

The possibility that the Soviets are not interested in a MIRV freeze must be faced squarely. The delay by the Soviets in accepting the U.S. invitation for SALT talks could indicate that the Soviet Union may not be as serious about halting the arms race as our Nation is. If the U.S.S.R. is interested in a moratorium on MIRV testing and deployment, the talks can begin immediately.

Congressional Resolutions on a MIRV Moratorium

The subcommittee considered the resolutions which have been introduced into the House of Representatives calling for a moratorium on the testing and deployment of MIRV.

The language of those resolutions, which have 113 sponsors or cosponsors in the House, differ somewhat in their language. Their intent, however, is quite similar. Each in its preamble declares that the development of MIRV's by the United States and the Soviet Union is a serious threat to the present strategic balance, weakens the possibility for effective arms control, and heightens the arms race.

The resolutions call upon U.S. officials to seek prompt convening of strategic arms limitation talks with the Soviet Union, and to propose, in the meantime, a mutual "freeze" on the testing and deployment of MIRV's.

Discussion of the proposals during the subcommittee hearings made possible achievement of even greater consensus among the principal sponsors of the resolutions. The witnesses generally concurred, for example, that a ban on MIRV testing should also require a ban to MRV testing, because of the ambiguity involved in Soviet testing of a multiple-warhead missile.

Further, most witnesses agreed that while the United States might wish to take a unilateral "first step" or initiative in order to achieve a MIRV testing freeze, a moratorium should be based only on a firm mutual understanding between the two powers.

It is the view of the subcommittee that the resolutions which it had under consideration served several good purposes. They provided a vehicle for a sizable number of Members to express their views on this vital matter affecting our national security. The resolutions helped draw public attention to the significance of this advance in nuclear weaponry and opened the opportunity for further exposition and understanding of the issues involved.

Conclusions

After giving careful consideration and review to the information, expert opinions and informed judgments elicited during the weeks of hearings on the issue of a MIRV testing moratorium, the subcommittee has concluded:

(1) By its nature, MIRV may increase the temptation for a preemptive first strike; therefore, MIRV'ing of existing missile forces will pose a substantial threat to the present nuclear balance.

(2) The deployment of MIRV systems by either the Soviet Union or the United States would increase the difficulties for achieving meaningful arms control and could well touch off a costly escalation of the nuclear arms race.

(3) As both sides continue to test multiple-warhead systems, the opportunity to halt this development is fast slipping away. It may not yet be too late to reach a workable agreement with the Soviet Union on a mutual testing and deployment moratorium.

(4) In order to obtain an adequate, enforceable moratorium, it is essential that certain collateral agreements also be reached by both sides.

(5) Because of the evident complexities involved in achieving a safe, effective, and meaningful agreement halting the testing of MIRV's, that objective can best be accomplished within the framework of the strategic arms limitation talks (SALT) between the Soviet Union and the United States.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Basing its judgment on the conclusions mentioned above, the subcommittee strongly urges the executive branch to give high priority to obtaining a MIRV freeze during the forthcoming SALT negotiations.

The recommendation avoids two extremes. One position would have the United States initiate active production of virtually every nuclear weapons systems conceived by scientists as a way of achieving "superiority" over the Soviet Union. The other extreme decries all nuclear weapons as inherently evil and is particularly set against new systems, regardless of their characteristics.

Both extreme positions err in failing to assess realistically a possible Soviet response to the policies which they advocate. For that reason, unilateral escalation of the numbers and kinds of nuclear weapons is likely, in the long run, to be as unsatisfactory as unilateral disarmament.

In a nuclear stalemate, a more rational approach to national security—an approach which avoids extremes—is one which emphasizes the need to maintain a sufficiency of power to deter nuclear attack and which seeks a climate for arms limitation.

Although the present administration wisely has set sufficiency as its objective, recent statements by Defense officials have been interpreted as going beyond the requirements of deterrence. The seeming conflict has caused a "confusing" situation—to quote Dr. Foster—and a climate of ambiguity which has possible dangers to the national security of the United States.

Also at odds with the idea of sufficiency is the notion that the United States might, in a unilateral act of self-denial, refuse to develop MIRV, regardless of what the Soviets do. In this situation too, the determinants of action are something other than maintaining an assured deterrent posture.

Because both sides have a stake in maintaining the nuclear balance, it is natural that they should enter into negotiations to discuss the control of technological advances in weaponry which might threaten the stability of the balance. That is, at least in part, the rationale behind the SALT talks. Because MIRV'ing by either or both sides threatens the balance, therefore, it deserves early consideration within the bilateral discussions.

Since it is clear that a moratorium on testing and deploying MIRV is beneficial only if it is firmly and unequivocally a reciprocal agreement, the subcommittee believes the matter can best be handled within SALT and that passage of a congressional resolution at this time

would not greatly enhance, and might impair, chances for an effective solution to the MIRV issue.

At the same time, we reaffirm the right and necessity of expressions from the legislative branch—House as well as Senate—on issues affecting America's security and strategic posture. Through the resolutions on a MIRV moratorium and the hearings which they occasioned, officials of the executive branch have been apprised of the thoughtful views and deep concerns about MIRV held by a substantial number of Members of Congress.

Now it is left to those officials to make full use of the opportunities which are expected to occur in the near future in order to achieve our mutually held goals of ending the arms race and initiating effective arms control.

○